

Black Badger



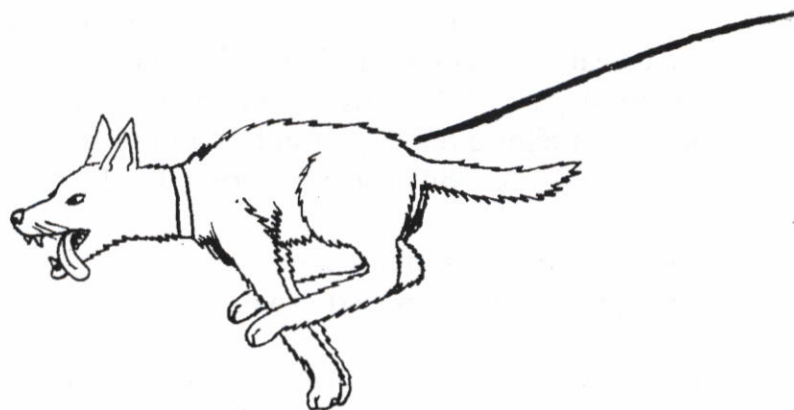
N°8



leads in the other hand, two dogs that liked to pull. It took me about four or five walks, with plenty of trial and error, to get a particular technique that seemed to work best for me. Eventually I just put both leads down and stepped on the lines right at the point where they emerge so I'd have both hands free for full fecal retrieval.

There are plenty of ups and downs that come with having a canine companion. She gets spastic around other dogs unless they come into our place, but loves to snuggle with us on the couch. Plus she's very good looking, which makes up for a lot.

The best part about having a dog is that you get to be judgmental about other dog owners, or as a famous dog trainer once said, "The only thing two dog trainers can agree on is that the third one is doing it all wrong."



BADGER OPENING

Welcome to the eighth issue of Black Badger, the weasely zine of musings and commentary. Another two years have elapsed since the last issue—which appeared two years after number six. My job as an EMT continues, and I have finally moved into the 9-1-1 system. Where before I was mostly operating a taxi (with oxygen for passengers), now I actually have the opportunity to use some of the skills I learned in EMT school; while I have yet to perform CPR on a patient, there are plenty of other skills in my scope of practice that I have used. The move from BLS (Basic Life Support—routine transports of stable patients) to ALS (Advanced Life Support—working with a paramedic on potentially life-threatening calls) has also given me a better work schedule. My BLS schedule totaled 50 hours a week, leaving me little time or energy for anything, let alone writing. My ALS schedule averages 42 (36 hours one week and 48 the next). This is part of the reason I am able to publish another issue of *Black Badger*, the finest antiauthoritarian personal zine in the English-speaking world.

All original graphics by John Henri.

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As always, special thanks to Collaris for editing and proofreading, and for her inexhaustible patience with me when I'm writing.

EXCERPTS OF A BADGER AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF AN ANARCHIST PRISONER

In 2001 prison bureaucrats in Tennessee implemented a ban on any and all anarchist or pro-anarchist literature as detrimental to institutional security. As a result, long-time anarchist prisoner Harold H. Thompson couldn't receive any of the zines or pamphlets that he had contributed to or written. He filed a lawsuit against the Department of Corrections, and requested affidavits from anarchists for evidence.

For the most part I make it a point to avoid interacting with representatives of the state; sometimes those interactions are inevitable, sometimes necessary. And as strange as it may sound, the cold-hearted creeps who run prisons are not immune to public scrutiny and occasionally respond to that pressure. Besides, I wanted to help make Harold's sentence a little more tolerable by making sure that he could receive interesting reading material.

The ban, while not being rescinded, has not been enforced (at least in Harold's case) since the lawsuit was filed.

Harold H. Thompson #93992
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... I have been a self-identified anarchist for over 20 years. In addition to public writing, I have been the facilitator of an anarchist study group for the past six *[now eleven]* years as well as helping to organize two *[now seven]* anarchist conferences.

(I've only seen the hideous shock collar once in public). Next down on my list is the choke chain. Choke chains and prong collars are meant to be used as "correction" devices (you are supposed to give the dog a snapping, attention-getting yank to "correct" it—think of Mister Grady in *The Shining*) when the dog does something you don't like; it takes the place of the word "no" and is about as ineffective in the long run. If the dog is a compulsive puller, the prongs can puncture the neck, leading to all kinds of medical problems. Choke chains, used at the incorrect angle and with excessive force, have been known to cause permanent throat and neck injuries and even death by crushed trachea.

The stupidest leash is the flexi-lead, the one with the very thin retractable line; the harness with the clip on the back is also ridiculous. The flexi-lead will never teach the dog to gauge distance to its human, and can never be used to teach the dog not to pull. The handle of this contraption is so bulky that it's difficult to operate the lock and the trigger with one hand without a lot of practice.

The back-clipped harness just gets the dog that much more excited about pulling; it allows the dog to pull with the strongest part of its body rather than just the neck. And because it allows the dog to pull at full strength, when the dog lunges, you will be yanked pretty hard.

The most absurd combination—one that I see all the time—is the prong collar attached to a flexi-lead.

There have been times when I've helped Collaris out by walking her clients' dogs, and there was one pair of hounds I took care of where my dexterity was put to the test. Two medium-large dogs on flexi-leads, two shit piles to scoop up in one hand while holding those bulky flexi-

word, becoming increasingly louder, and using a harsh tone, perhaps with an upraised hand? Would that make you understand it better? You'd probably be intimidated quickly, lose any kind of focus you might have had up to that point, and conclude that when that person makes that combination of noises s/he is upset. Maybe a beating is coming shortly. But since you still don't know what it means, you cannot correlate its use to any particular action on your part; the person seems to invoke the noise at random, whether you're doing something normal for you, or something you think will elicit a reward from the person.

Rewarding behavior you like is how you teach the dog to do tricks (anything from a simple sit to more complicated chains, like running an agility course). There are plenty of actions that are normal for a dog that can be shaped and associated with a verbal or visual cue. Shake, play dead, a down-stay, getting them to ignore food on the ground; anything can qualify and be rewarded to be turned into a regular part of your dog's request repertoire.

Once you observe a particular behavior that you don't want the dog to repeat, you have to figure out what the chain of events is that leads up to the undesired action. Getting the dog to do a trick that's already part of its repertoire is a great way to change its focus. Or you can try to counter-condition the dog. Our dog doesn't get along well with most other dogs. But avoiding dogs in an urban environment is impossible, so we try to make dog encounters a happy, reward-filled, event. Lots of treats, happy voices, even a little dancing around. Collaris and I frequently look like fools, but it's better than trying to break up a dog fight.

My least favorite kind of popular collar is the prong collar

... I have also engaged in correspondence with various prisoners in state and federal detention. My support for inmates has also included periodic visits in person. A very notable characteristic of prison administrations that I have experienced is the arbitrariness of enforcement of department policies, as well as the arbitrary nature of many of those policies...

Reacting with irritation and even outrage (and subsequently having that behavior labeled "a risk to the secure operations of the facility") to the exercise of obviously arbitrary authority is what I would consider natural and human. The political theory of anarchism only articulates a more or less coherent framework for understanding why such resistance is to be expected. Anarchism entails a relentless critique of power, whether that power derives from a so-called legitimate or illegitimate source, and whether it is exercised in a so-called humane or inhumane manner.

Resistance to the arbitrary and capricious nature of the exercise of authority and power is much older than the theory of anarchism. It is those who directly suffer oppressive conditions who understandably resist; they do not need to read a magazine, or a book, or a poem, or a letter to be inspired. Nothing that anyone else writes can compel inmates to want their jailers to behave humanely; they just have to confront their own suffering at the hands of those with the power to control their every activity.

The Tennessee Department of Corrections decision to ban anarchist literature inside its prisons is ironic enough because such literature is not (yet) banned in public or in other state or federal prisons. The greater irony is that this literature is not considered a threat to public security; it is only in a system of incarceration where people are under

even greater scrutiny, supervision, surveillance, and constraint that such a threat is perceived. It is my considered opinion that the administrators at the Tennessee Department of Corrections are scapegoating anarchist literature for the failures of their own policies.



may not, to varying degrees) understand human behavior and motivations, but that doesn't necessarily (and usually does not) translate into being smarter than a dog, cat, cow, bird, horse...

Being smarter than a dog necessitates trying to figure out what it means to be a dog on the dog's own terms. This is more difficult than it might seem. An important aspect of this is to figure out what motivates the dog. Food, a ball to chew on, a toy to tug on; something is certain to get the pooch's attention. That's the thing you use as a reward.

Many dog people find the use of rewards—especially food—problematic; they think the dog should do the things we ask because they “love us” rather than for what they can get from us. But dogs are not willfully disobedient children who have the forethought to manipulate our emotions; a dog is an animal with a brain about the size of a lemon.

It's amazing that dogs stay interested in their humans given that we are almost never clear about what we actually want from them. The next time you see a person with a dog (especially a person being loud to a dog that looks like it's dragging the human behind it rather than the human taking the dog on a walk), see if you can figure out what the human wants from it without listening to the verbal command(s). If *you* can't figure it out, then neither can the dog. If you are able to figure it out, see how many steps were required to discover it; chances are you had to think like a human to get it.

Another common misconception about dogs is that they understand English, especially the word “no.” If somebody came up to you and said “Reissverschluss,” would you understand? What if that person repeated this strange

BADGER THOUGHTS ON HAVING A DOG

Collaris and I have had a dog for six years now. We picked her up from the city pound, where she was listed as a "Chow/Shepherd Mix." Seems that there are two basic mixed breeds at any given shelter: the Chow/Shepherd mix and the Lab/Pit mix. Occasionally you see an Australian Cattle Dog mix, but when a shelter gets a dog and the staff can't identify its breed, they foist those two vague "mixes" on the pooches. Don't get me started on the whole breed issue; suffice to say that the history of standardized breeds is completely tied in (historically and ideologically) with Victorian aristocratic perspectives on race, racism, colonialism, and sexual propriety.

Our initial attempts at training and obedience were fraught with blunders and naïveté. Both of us were marginally ignorant, so we enrolled in a basic obedience class at our local Humane Society and learned the foundations of positive reinforcement training. Collaris and I should have remembered from our various studies in psychology (mine for college requirements, hers for professional training) that this is the way to get long-term and reliable desired behavior from any organism. We became convinced of the superiority of this school of training, despite our dog's damaged psyche (almost inevitable given her stay at the shelter, and who knows what kind of previous abuse). After six years, she is still a handful. But obedience and training don't just end after the first or second class series; every walk is a training session.

The main factor in getting a dog to be more obedient and attentive to your wishes is to be smarter than the dog. This sounds easy because we humans pride ourselves on our supreme intelligence and reasoning faculties. We may (or

BADGER GETS A SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PRESENT

For my 45th birthday Collaris started teasing me with the promise of a surprise. She teased me for about a month solid, never dropping any clues (aside from the deliberately misleading ones) about what it might be. Finally a few days before the Big Day, she gave me a homemade card, complete with glitter and feathers. She got me a totally cool present: a gift certificate for a tandem skydive from ten thousand feet.

The airport is small, just off the main highway, with two runways. The office is even smaller. We go in, meet the experienced skydivers and I put on my jumpsuit—black and red of course. I watch and listen as the owner of the company explains to the clients who're going up before me what will happen, what he expects from them, and how the parachute operates. There's a computerized failsafe system that will open the chute at a pre-determined altitude if anything bad should happen to the skydiver. He also gives a quick lesson on what to do just before landing (which is handy, just in case the client knocks out the expert with flailing limbs) and how to get back on the ground safely.

We're supposed to arch our backs as far as possible when we clear the airplane. This will allow us to be safe in freefall, which should last for at least 20 seconds. There's nothing like freefall they say.

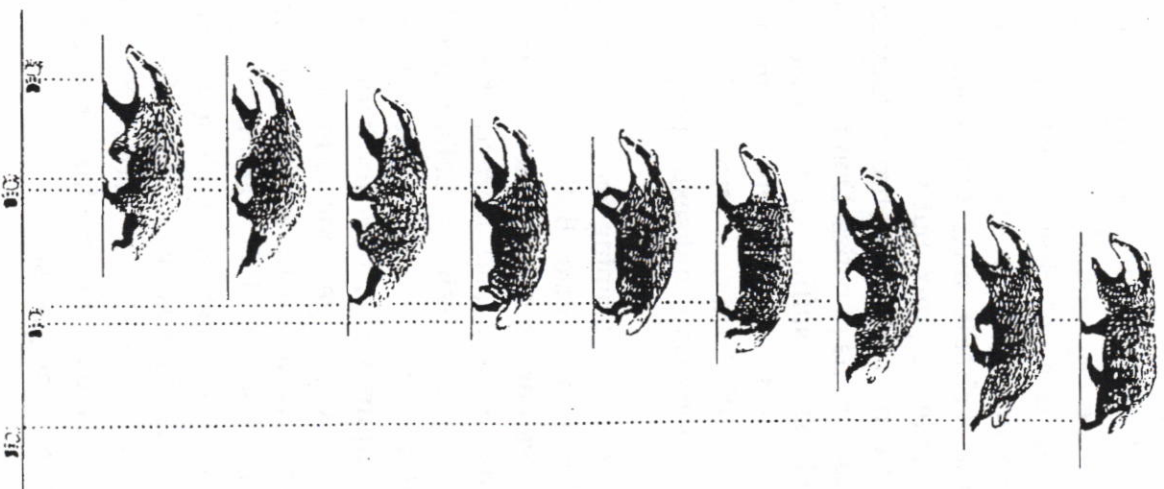
Walking over to the plane, the pilot tells my diver and me the story of the previous clients, a straight couple. The man jumps without incident, but the woman decides, at ten thousand feet, that she can't go through with it. "No way," she says. "If you come back down in the plane, you will die," avers the experienced diver. At a certain point, he

grabs her, hooks her into his parachute harness and, according to the pilot, tosses her forward like a sack of potatoes. As she is about to leave the relative safety of the airplane (more on that below), she flails so much that she knocks the digital camera out of the hands of the owner of the skydiving school.

My diver and the pilot have a great laugh at her expense. I chuckle a bit, out of politeness toward the two men who will have total control over my life for the next half hour or so. It's certainly not because I think I will be as cool as a cucumber at 10,000 feet.

The airplane is even smaller than the office; the passenger compartment is about as large as a twin-size bed. Aside from the pilot (a boy barely out of his teens), there's room for only four people. With the diver and me there seems to be no room to spare. There's duct tape all over the inside of this contraption—not a comforting sight to be sure—and it reeks of fuel. It makes a lot of noise as it starts up and trundles down the runway, shaking and rumbling. I have watched it go up and come back down three times since we arrived at the airport, so in spite of the grumbles and complaints of the machinery, I feel somewhat confident that we will attain our target altitude without crumbling to dust like a vampire at the end of a horror movie.

The plane takes nearly 15 minutes to climb to the appropriate altitude, describing a slow upward spiral. The view is of course awesome. Traveling by passenger planes (almost exclusively jets) makes it nearly impossible to see one particular view of any local scenery; this trip allowed me to experience an increasingly wide vista of the nearby mountains and lakes, and, as we gained altitude, to see the Sierras as well as the Pacific Ocean. This kept me distracted from the impending leap into the air.



already anarchist-positive instead of trying to recruit newbies. That's why I am critical of anarchist activities from an anarchist perspective—to try to keep anarchists honest about what they are doing and why they are doing it... I think of my project as being a non-sectarian anarchist who uses imminent critique to showcase the shortcomings of various anarchist theories and activities. Where I could be called sectarian is in my total lack of tolerance for Liberalism or Maoism masquerading as anarchism. So my target audience (if I can use such a phrase meaningfully) is other anarchists.

The organization question has always been central to anarchists, and the questions are: What kind is best suited to a particular project? When is it better to jettison or walk away from an organization (or organizational form) that no longer serves the goals of the members? With whom shall we organize? When shall we organize with them, and on what terms? *Anarchy* magazine as a project and I as an individual have often been labeled "anti-organization" by those who can only conceive of anarchist organizations with one or two models. So if I criticize or reject those one or two models, then clearly I must be against all organization. This is totally absurd.

I dislike CrimethInc. too. In a recent review of *Anarchy in the Age of Dinosaurs* I referred to reading CrimethInc. writings as being akin to eating popcorn: you know you've eaten something but it leaves you unsatisfied. I remember laughing when reading it, but weeks later couldn't remember anything about why.

When we got to 8000 feet, the pilot opened the door on the right side of the aircraft. I had thought it was noisy before. Now my diver had to yell at me so that I could hear him. "Kneel facing forward," he told me. Check. "I'm now going to hook your harness into my harness." I felt him scoot up to me, felt a few tugs, heard a couple of snaps and clicks. Check.

During that time (and for several minutes after) I instinctively tried to grab something—anything—inside the plane on my left side. Unfortunately there was nothing much to hold that wasn't vitally important for flying the plane; the pilot insistently (and continually) removed my left hand from whatever controls I happened to clasp in a frantic search for stability and safety (he obviously had plenty of experience with frightened passengers—he was very gentle). After all, there was absolutely nothing keeping me inside this little vehicle, next to an open doorway 9000-10,000 feet up, with what seemed to be no more than six inches intervening between me and certain doom.

"Put your right foot out the door onto the step over the wheel." *That little bar that's about six-by-two inches? You're kidding.* "Now lean your shoulders all the way out of the door, grab the harness under your shoulders, and look at the bottom of the wingtip." *Are you out of your fucking mind????* "Don't hold your breath. Okay, ready? One... two..." And out we went; if he'd made it to three, I might have had time to reconsider.

I remember being pushed. And screaming (*I'm not holding my breath*). Lots of blue sky and loud wind in my ears.

"Let go of the harness and spread your arms!" At that point my lungs were completely out of air; I took a breath

and my screams of panic became whoops of joy and triumph. Free fall is amazing, almost indescribable. I didn't experience a sensation of dropping as I have when on a roller coaster—there was no sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach.

You don't fall straight down; since the plane is going about 80 miles per hour when you start your free fall, you fall in an arc—being pulled directly toward the ground to be sure, but also moving forward with the plane. And you don't get a visual relationship to anything stationary and horizontal. There's only the horizon, the ground, and the wind. It's very cool.

After about ten or fifteen more seconds, he opened the chute and we were swung around horizontally twice. He gave me some quick guidance on using the hand controls, both for making a path, and perhaps more importantly, for landing.

When the parachute opens there's hardly any more noise. You're still falling of course, but it's much slower, and there's only a slight whooshing in your ears. You just enjoy floating.

For five or six more minutes, we fell in graceful circles, occasionally making tighter spins that sent our feet sideways. We bounced onto the ground on our rear ends, scooting to a stop. Collaris was there to greet us. She hadn't had time to open the digital camera to take photos.

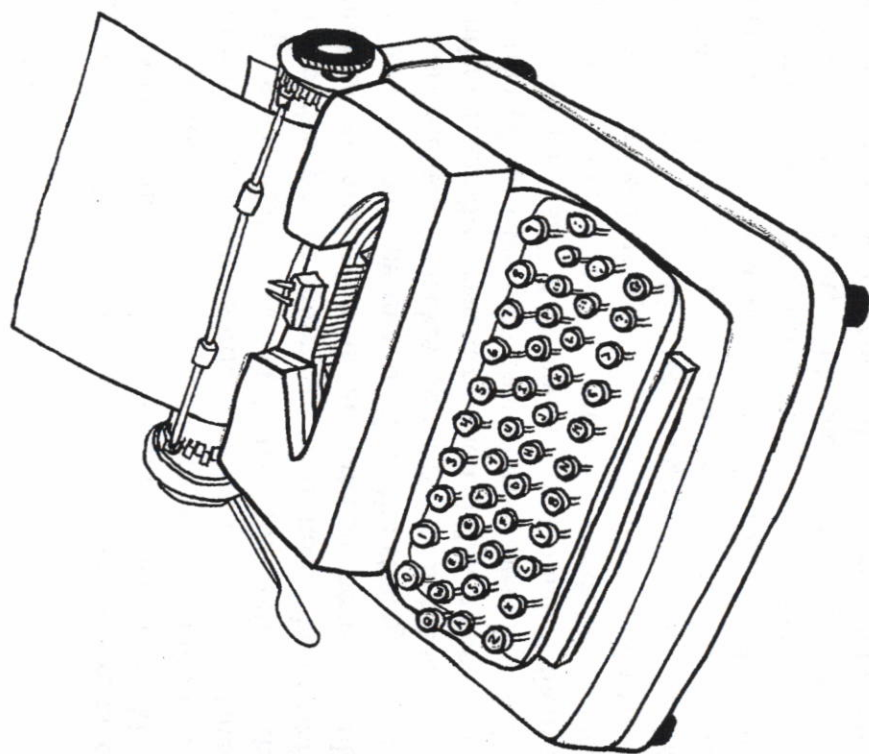
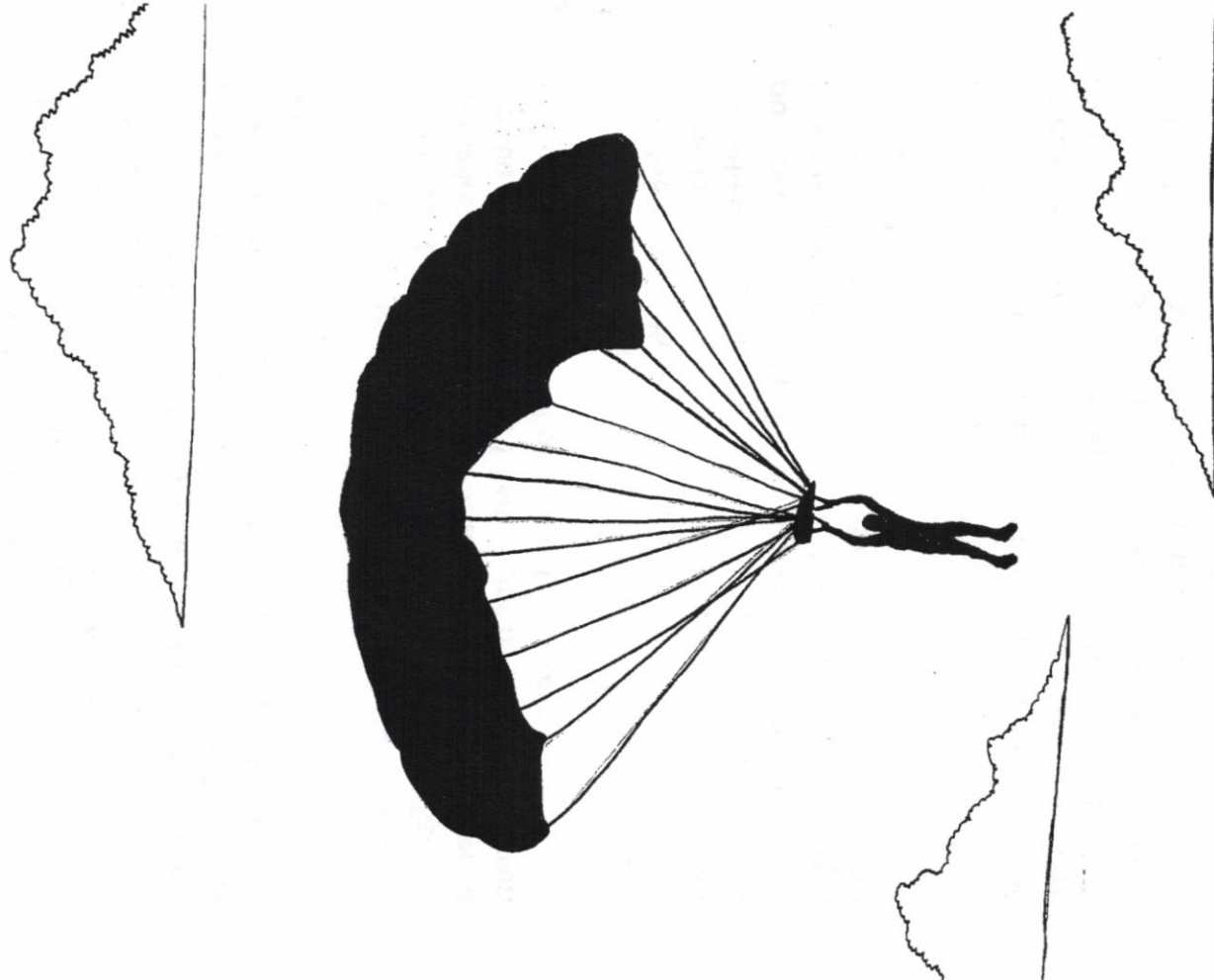
I was jazzed for at least another hour after landing. I will definitely do that again.

BADGER EMAIL TO AN ANARCHIST

I made the acquaintance of a newly local anarchist after my presentation on the 70th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Revolution. We had a short correspondence; these are the highlights.

On communicating anarchist ideas to a vast public—why is this an important activity to you? This brings up the larger and more complicated question about the role of revolutionary individuals and the role of a revolutionary organization. Revolutionaries—especially explicitly anti-state revolutionaries—will always be a minority in a mass culture; anarchism will always be a minority political philosophy. The contradictions and tensions within a mass-based organization/plan are enormous and, I believe, untenable for anarchists. A big problem is the notion that with enough members of a group or tendency, it makes the possibility of revolution (let's not even begin discussing what a "successful" revolution might be or look like) that much more certain. This is the difference between quality and quantity; revolution is not a numbers game. To talk of critical mass, or *mass* anything, is to play the democratic game of majority rule, and in its most crass form of 50% plus one.

Most normal people I interact with and who know I'm an anarchist take a position of curious incomprehension. I consider myself fairly articulate and intelligent, but most normal folks just aren't interested. Or they'll say stuff like "It's a great idea, but most people are too stupid to go for it," (and while the implication is that *they* are not too stupid to get it and/or go for it, they have other things in their lives that are more relevant) or "It'd be too chaotic," or "It just won't work; human nature, blah blah blah..." For me it's more important to try to influence those who are



BADGER THOUGHTS ON SUFFERING

I transported a five-year old cancer patient to radiation treatments three times. The first trip, she was in discomfort but didn't seem to be in such bad shape. The second one is described below. The last time, she was using an even larger amount of morphine but was calmer; she colored a picture of Eyore, which graces my former partner's refrigerator. Our patient died ten days later. This is an excerpt of a letter I wrote to a Jewish prisoner I regularly correspond with.

...As for the tensions created by little J's incredible suffering, I appreciate your expressions of dismay, confusion, skepticism, and maturity. As a person without a regular religious practice I hadn't put her illness and pain within the framework of theology. I still don't.

There is suffering in the world. It sometimes appears as if it is due to the actions of the suffering person; religions try to make sense of it by proposing that the sufferer did something bad (a sin) and is therefore/thereby being punished for it. A theological system built on this kind of tit-for-tat retribution is not one that I find compelling... Prayer may have the power to ease suffering, but it cannot eradicate it.

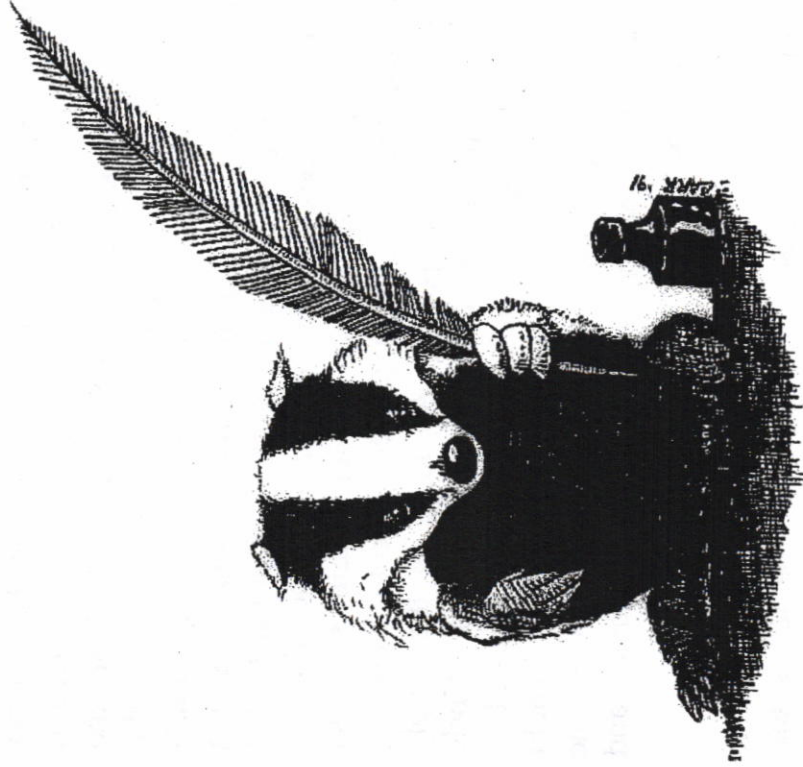
Death and decay are part of the laws of the universe, and disease (whether natural or caused and/or increased by human agency) is a part of that. Many aspects of western culture are geared toward avoiding these conclusions. Death is seen as a bad thing, even a disease to be cured, rather than as inevitable, and even as one form of healing. Cold comfort for J and her family to be sure, but we need to have a better relationship with life...

An editorial cartoon appeared with the word IRAQ surrounded by flames and dripping blood. The A was made to look like a spray-painted circle-A.

Anarchists are all too familiar with the smug titters of authoritarians, who are too obtuse to conceive of any kind of organization created by anarchists. But to impute the situation of increasing disorder and escalating bloodshed in Iraq, as editorial cartoonist D has done, either to the political philosophy of anarchism or to those who identify themselves as anarchists is an offense beyond insult. Regardless of what one may think of the strategies of the various armed factions jockeying for power in the situation of political instability created by the US/UK invasion and occupation (should we then characterize these imperialist powers as anarchist?), it is obvious that none of them is proposing international anti-state anti-hierarchical federations. Indeed, if we are to believe the mainstream reports, the insurgents who are vying for state power in Iraq are driven by religious sectarianism and/or ethnic chauvinism—not by a desire to abolish the state and capitalism. To equate the universally recognized symbol of anarchism (the circle-A) with the chaos and horror of imperialist occupation and/or civil war is the height of bad faith and monumental ignorance.



taken since at least the time of the Paris Commune. Such activity is always and necessarily anti-statist and anti-capitalist. Members of the anarchist mass movement in Spain (despite the stupidities of its self-appointed leaders, who betrayed the most fundamental anarchist principle by joining the government) actively promoted this tradition by forming industrial and agricultural collectives in areas where revolutionary self-organization was possible—that is, where the Spanish Republic was ignored. The Spanish Communists destroyed them as soon as they were strong enough militarily. So much for “social justice.”



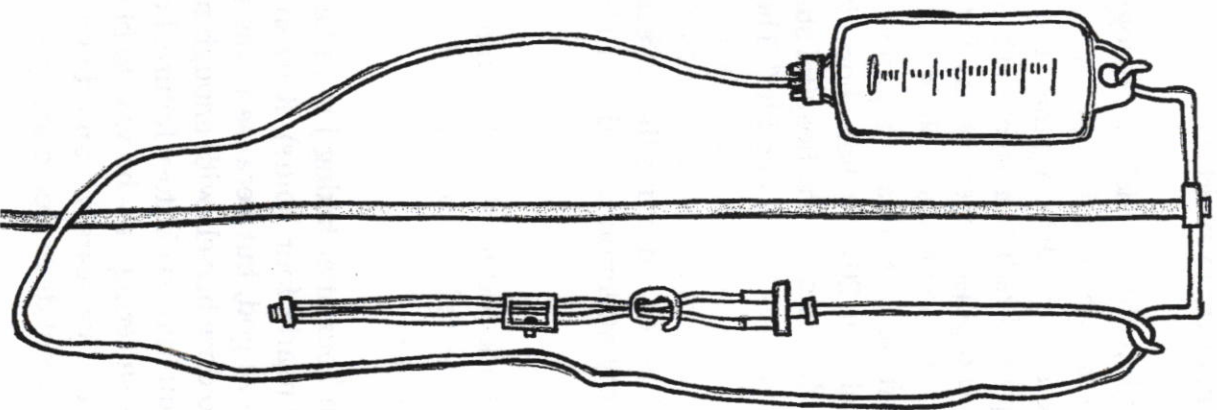
The question isn't "why is there suffering?" but "how do we best deal with suffering?" The idea that god "allows" or "permits" or "causes" suffering is an abdication of recognizing our roles as humans in relation to suffering (that of others as well as our own). It is not god who "allows" or "causes" suffering—it is we who do nothing about it, or ignore it, or try to avoid it.

How much does allopathic medicine/ideology contribute to suffering? Seven or eight months ago, J would have been dead had it not been for the strict regimen and protocols of AMA chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Instead, little J has been zapped and poisoned every day for those seven or eight months, to the point where she's got virtually no immune system left, and is a raging junkie. She's been terminally ill for almost 20% of her short life, and has suffered greatly at the hands of the hospital staff. They are not neutral, just trying to "save her life." They hold out false hope for the family (which certainly increases their suffering) and they subject J to a cruel series of drugs and radiation, etc. That is the suffering that affects me as an EMT; I don't turn my attention to god and blame her for cancer and tumors.

Every day I go to work and most of the time I am merely helping to prolong people's misery. God has little or nothing to do with any of it.

When I cried for an hour after taking J to radiation (which she underwent for nearly four hours), it wasn't because I was angry (or sad) at god, but because J was in so much pain that she had to dose herself with enough morphine to put any healthy adult into respiratory failure. I didn't think about why she was suffering or who was to blame. I cried because it sucks to be five years old and dying of so much cancer that even the most dedicated oncologists have given

up and have put her on palliative care. I cried because the brain tumors were visible on the surface of her hairless head. I cried because there was nothing I could do for her, her family, or anyone else who knew her.



formed a pact in 1939, over the remains of Spain.

The Spanish workers' and peasants' revolution that began in 1936 as a result of the attempted clerico-militarist coup against the Republic was actively suppressed by the Republic and its Stalinist supporters (see Burnett Bolloten's *The Spanish Civil War* and George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*), just as the non-Leninist Russian soviets of workers, peasants, and soldiers were crushed by the Bolsheviks eighteen years earlier (see Maurice Brinton's *The Bolsheviks and Worker's Control*). The intentions of the Lincolns and their allies and supporters may have been sincere in terms of deliciously vague phrases like "the cause of social justice," but their first and overriding loyalty was to the Party and its bosses in Moscow. The show trials that started in the same year as the Spanish conflict, the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the military interventions in Eastern Europe just after the Second World War, the repression of the striking Berlin workers in 1953, the crushing of the Hungarian Revolution... the list of Marxist-Leninist duplicity, betrayal, and counter-revolution is long and brutal. Yet according to R—and presumably the author of the book—it was only "after Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev revealed the murderous crimes of Josef Stalin" that "many veterans [of the Lincoln Battalion] dropped out of the party." As long as the amply documented counter-revolutionary misdeeds of "Uncle Joe" and his loyal gangsters remained unacknowledged by the Party, everything was fine, and "social justice" could continue to be executed. Whatever contributions to the betterment of humanity were made by Leninists and Stalinists throughout history were unintentional.

Horizontal decision making and direct (ie non-representative, non-electoral) action are the forms that worker and peasant revolutionary self-organization have

cannot say anything about its contents, but the subject of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War deserves something more than the glowing pro-Stalinist whitewash usually presented in such volumes—and in R's puff piece.

First off, while the Lincolns may have been "poorly armed," that is certainly not true for the bulk of the International Brigades. Being organized by the Comintern, all the IB contingents, as well as the Communist-dominated Spanish Popular Army, got the best arms supplied by Stalin (and paid for at falsely inflated prices—see Gerald Howson's *Arms for Spain*); it was the non-Stalinist militias that received sub-standard arms, when they received any at all.

Second, it is only too true that the IBs "battled for the Spanish Republic." Unfortunately, the Republic was not worth defending from a revolutionary or radical perspective. Made up of social democrats, liberals, and other anti-revolutionary forces—including the Spanish Communist Party—the Republic was a bulwark against the collectivization of industry and agriculture by the Spanish workers and peasants. The leaders of the Republic not only gave away the gold in the Bank of Spain to pay for Stalin's so-called aid, but they also refused to consider granting Morocco its independence (which would most likely have undercut Franco's Moroccan shock troops' loyalty) because they didn't want to upset the French and British colonialists (see Antony Beevor's *Spanish Civil War*). But the defense of the thoroughly corrupt and bourgeois Republic fit in perfectly well with Stalin's foreign policy of mollifying the bourgeois governments of France and Britain by showing no interest in revolution in Western Europe; Stalin's plan was to form some kind of pseudo-fascist alliance with France and Britain against Hitler's Germany. That worked so well that Stalin and Hitler

BADGER THOUGHTS ON THE FIRST DAY WORKING IN THE 9-1-1 SYSTEM

Today I saw my first homicide victims. Yeah, that's right. Plural. Three. A triple homicide; a mother, her daughter, and her grandson. The suspect was the brother-in-law of the daughter. The only person who was in the apartment who survived is alive because he jumped through a window. The apartment was on the third floor. He cleared a fence and landed on a patch of grass, breaking his wrist and his back. But he didn't get shot.

The suspect was one cold dude. All three of his victims had powder burns on their necks, heads, and upper chests. Point blank. Shot all three facing them. Ice cold.

I've seen dead bodies before. For several months I was part of the *chevra kadisha*, the Jewish burial society. We prepared bodies for funerals, washing them with warm water, combing their hair, cleaning under their nails—all of it with great tenderness and respect. It was very sweet.

When one of us didn't prepare the body we'd sit with the casket, a pine box secured with dowels. No metal. No decorative trim. Plain.

When a Jew dies, s/he is never left alone until after the burial (a leftover from the time when predators roamed the desert?). By the time the *chevra kadisha* gets involved the person has usually been dead for several hours; the bodies are cool, yellowish, and waxy. They look, and are, obviously different from the living.

Bombarded as we are in televised culture by the living playing dead (that is, when they are not engaged in the

more banal profession of being the living dead portraying the living), most people don't know what a real dead body looks like.

But I do. All the bodies I helped prepare were intact, dying of (more or less) natural causes, such as living too long in a toxic environment.

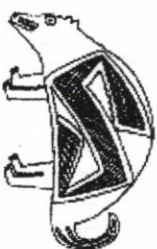
The three members of the same family I saw today were still warm (as it were). They weren't yellowish or waxy. It was different for many reasons, not least of which was the presence of half a dozen firefighter-medics and ten or eleven cops. All together in a small, enclosed space (except for the broken windows). Clothing cut apart by trauma shears so the medics could find the wounds and attach electrodes for the cardiac monitors.

Clutter and chaos. Detritus from the living and the dead. I'm not sure how I feel as I sit writing this seven hours later.

Today I saw my first homicide victims. Yeah, that's right. Plural.



removing the ability of bullies—small-time schoolyard thugs and State-sanctioned professionals alike—to control our lives entails much more than running to some big brother. It requires the courage to face the facts of violence (its constant threat and its periodic use in hierarchical societies) and deal with them head-on with practical flexibility instead of bourgeois ideology.



The review of an oral history of the Lincoln was nothing more than a shameless plug for the book, which is yet another addition to the mythology surrounding the Abraham Lincoln Battalion—its proper name is indeed Battalion, since those who went to fight with it never numbered nearly enough to justify calling it a brigade. The so-called review tried to put the veterans' public lives in a context that focused on their progressive activism before, during, and after their experiences in Spain. I deliberately mentioned only non-anarchist sources for my analysis.

I had expected angry denunciations for daring to attack the legacy of such a venerated organization—especially considering that so many of the veterans live locally, including their uber-Stalinist last Commissar—but none were forthcoming. One reader called me and asked to have some other examples of my writing on Spain; no doubt there's now a dossier on me at the local Cheka.

I would like to comment on the announcement of the publication of *The Frontlines of Social Change: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* [sic]. Not having read the book, I

and/or killed on the job are most often attacked with their own weapons.

B would like children to be educated "how to avoid fights if possible, and how to get adult help if they need it." Aside from the fact that the first lesson all reputable martial arts masters teach their students is precisely how to avoid fights, I wonder how long it's been since she's been around groups of children. I still have vivid memories of being bullied; the last thing I wanted to do was involve adults in any conflict—at least after the first time I did. The cycle of shame (to the bully) and the accompanying escalation of brutality (to the victim) is the same with the intervention of adults as it is with public outsmarting. It is the typically middle-class way to solve problems: let someone else take care of it. For children, she promotes the intervention of adults at the request of the child. For adults, I can only guess that she would promote the intervention of the cops or some other legally constituted authority. What she is really promoting is the same old authoritarian reliance on superior force. She just isn't calling it that, continuing the camouflage of power and violence that exists as a constant underlying fact of life in the modern State.

Rather than relying on the State, cops, adults, or others with access to legally sanctioned violence, those of use who are interested in living with the least possible amount of violence—in schools, in public, in our homes—will certainly be better served by finding ways to relate to others that disarm bullies while empowering ourselves. Martial arts training, non-violent communication, transparent decision-making processes, and promoting honesty and egalitarianism in our interpersonal relationships are all tools that can be used to increase individual and communal self-reliance. Permanently

BADGER LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The editors and writers of a twice-weekly free paper in Berkeley continue to provide the inspiration for my short responses to their smug left-liberalism.

A group of artists organized and held an unauthorized parade through downtown Santa Cruz to protest some typically stupid (and unremembered by me) city policy.

By B's own account, the artists seem like regular Americans who believed all that talk about civil disobedience in high school history class. The folks who organized a parade outside the bounds of the Law were people with a strong sense of what is good and proper when confronted with the capriciousness of institutionalized power and its loyal opposition. Characterizing their politics as "somewhat rudimentary" and "tending toward anarchism" might make a smug bourgeoisie feel satisfied in her own illusions about the State and their watchdogs (the police), but it really says more about B's prejudicial stereotypes about anarchism. While anarchists have always been weak on political economy, we have almost to a person been on the cutting edge of analyses of power and its effects on those who wield it and those who fall victim to it. For example, one will come away amazed at the prescience of Bakunin and Malatesta when they wrote of the certain future of a Marxist-controlled state (i.e. that it would be more despotic than the tyrannies the Marxists proposed to replace). This is hardly "rudimentary." And what anti-anarchist could resist repeating that old ironic *de rigueur* slam, claiming that anarchists oppose organization? While it is true that most anarchists remain highly skeptical of organization for organization's sake, we also know that without

organization, nothing can be accomplished. Such a simpliminded and misleading characterization (as if the only kind of useful or successful organization has to be hierarchical and based on authority) is no less annoying for its ubiquity.



Even before the recent national outcry against pre-teen and teenage bullying, the editor of the paper pronounced her solution to the problem—getting the proper authorities involved. Once again, Berkeley leads the way!

B's editorial on bullies in the schoolyard begs more questions than it answers. Defeating bullying is indeed difficult, especially when the only so-called solutions offered are filtered through the lens of middle-class liberalism.

B mentions folktales in which bullies are outsmarted, apparently offering that strategy as effective in defeating those who are physically stronger. I enjoy such tales—as tales. But in the real world, as in these stories, outsmarting bullies is a purely individual response to particular bullies. The hero of the story is subsequently left alone, allowing the bully the opportunity to bother someone less quick-witted and resourceful.

The bullies who were happy to torment me routinely when I was a child almost immediately backed off when they heard that I had begun studying Chinese martial arts. Since there was no shame in it, their decision did not require any escalated response against me for them to save face. If I had been forced by circumstances to fight, and had managed to best one of that gang, it certainly would have provoked some plan for revenge. Contrary to what B asserts in her editorial, this has nothing to do with blaming the victim. For those who choose the way of the bully, violence, revenge, and force are their own rewards.

Martial arts training may not be "the right way to deal with bullying in schools," but it is *one* way. In my case, it was 100% successful; there was no need to show anyone whether or not my training was effective. Indeed I am convinced that it would *not* have been effective, which brings up another point. B's good friend, a martial arts champion, obviously was caught off guard, sadly and tragically murdered by someone he was trying to help. That he is described as a "champion" indicates that he was probably training for competitions, not potentially dangerous real-life situations. The difference between martial arts and self-defense is that the arts take place within a controlled environment; self-defense systems, on the other hand, are meant to curtail an opponent's ability to harm you. B's friend's fate is not the fault of martial arts in general, his style in particular, or even poor training. The fact is that in this society there exist deranged people who think nothing of harming or killing other human beings (most of whom work for the State as cops and soldiers). The best martial arts training in the world cannot stop someone with the ambition and determination to kill—unless the martial artist kills first. Parenthetically, the State's professional bullies (the police) who are injured